



Virginia Department of Health

DIVISION OF ENVIRONMENTAL EPIDEMIOLOGY

*P.O. Box 2448, 109 Governor Street, Suite 418
Richmond, VA 23219, (804) 864-8141*

Cat scratch Disease or *Bartonella henselae*

What is Cat scratch disease?

Cat scratch disease (CSD) is bacterial disease caused by *Bartonella henselae*. Cats are the main reservoir of this organism.

Who gets Cat scratch disease?

Anyone bitten, scratched, licked or exposed to an infectious cat or kitten is susceptible to the disease.

Where is Cat scratch disease found?

Any domestic cat has the potential to be a reservoir for this disease. Infectious cats usually appear healthy. Fleas and ticks that infest cats may be infected as well.

How is Cat scratch disease spread?

Transmission usually occurs when an infectious cat or kitten bites, scratches or licks a susceptible person. Cat fleas are not known to transmit the disease to humans.

What are the symptoms?

A red papular lesion may appear at the site of the exposure and a lymph node near the exposure site may swell. Sometimes a person with CSD may experience fever, headache, fatigue, and a poor appetite.

How soon after the exposure do the symptoms appear?

The primary lesion usually appears in 3 to 14 days. The swollen lymph node may occur 5 to 50 days after the exposure.

Do infected people need to be excluded from work or school?

No.

What is the treatment for Cat scratch disease?

Treatment is not recommended for healthy people with uncomplicated disease. Immunocompromised patients will be treated with long term antibiotics.

How can Cat scratch disease be prevented?

Clean cat scratches and bites thoroughly. Wash your hands after handling a cat, especially a kitten. Protecting your cat from fleas and ticks may reduce the likelihood of your cat being infected.